

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 23, 2015

Governor Chris Christie  
P.O. Box 001  
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Governor Christie,

Clean, available and affordable water is one of New Jersey's most precious resources. Clean water is at the foundation of our quality of life, public health and economy. To that end, we urge you to revise the outdated NJ Statewide Water Supply Master Plan (NJSWSP).

Through the passage of the Water Supply Management Act, the New Jersey Legislature has long recognized that the "water resources of the state are public assets....held in trust...and are essential to the health, safety, economic welfare, recreational and aesthetic enjoyment... of the people of New Jersey." The Legislature was clear when they recognized the need to establish a system to "ensure adequate supply and quality to accommodate present and future needs; to ensure adequate quality and to protect the natural environment of the waterways of the state."

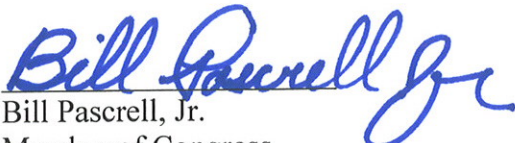
The NJSWSP represents the planning mechanism by which our state approaches management of its water needs. It provides a framework to guide the management of potable, industrial, recreational and ecological uses, initiate conservation strategies, and develop the State's water supply resources to ensure that a safe and adequate water supply will be available into the foreseeable future, including times of drought. By law, the Plan must be updated every 5 years. The last major reconsideration of the plan was adopted in 1996 under Governor Christine Todd Whitman. This document, so critical to ensuring informed management of our water resources, and an invaluable tool in anticipating shortfalls and pending water crisis is now nearly 20 years out of date.


The last adopted update to the NJSWSP identified potentially significant statewide and regional water supply problems, constraints and issues. The update clearly stated that some of these issues needed to be resolved within a short time after the plan's adoption, while others could be addressed over more time. Among the most crucial issues of an outdated plan is aging infrastructure. In 2013, a blue-ribbon panel identified up to \$8 billion in unmet needs to upgrade aging drinking water infrastructure. For example, it is estimated that 20% of the state's drinking water supply is lost before it reaches customers, even as New Jersey lags behind other states in policies to pinpoint the sources and reduce these losses. In the absence of an updated plan, the public is unable to ascertain the progress towards addressing these identified concerns, and to be informed about new issues facing the state's water supplies that may have arisen in the interceding 20 years.

It is clear that rising sea levels, flooding, and extreme weather events precipitated by global climate change all pose risks to drinking water infrastructure. On November 1, 2013, President Obama issued Executive Order 13653, "Preparing the United States for the impacts of Climate Change," which calls on federal agencies to plan for risks related to climate change and to support investments resilient to these changes. Customers of all public water systems, large and small, wealthy and disadvantaged, deserve safe, affordable drinking water. Unfortunately, public water systems across the country are facing staggering infrastructure replacement costs and emerging threats including climate change.


In a time of limited public resources, governmental decisions regarding the investment of public funds must be guided by an informed, efficient and effective plan of action which maximizes the benefit and minimizes waste. A plan to guide such decision making is critical, and today in New Jersey, absent.

Sincerely,

  
Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
Member of Congress

  
Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Member of Congress

  
Albio Sires  
Member of Congress

  
Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress